

Telephone Scams And Older Consumers

Protect Yourself Against

TELEMARKETING FRAUD



NEVER act immediately - take your time and think things over. Check the offer out with family members, financial advisors, or the Telemarketing Fraud Unit.



NEVER give out your credit card, bank account, or social security number to unknown callers.



NEVER send or wire money in advance to claim prizes or collect winnings.

Telemarketing Fraud Unit

406/444-4500

(Press or Select Option 3)

**Consumer Protection Office
Montana Department of Administration**



Have your name removed from mailing lists by writing to:

MAIL PREFERENCE SERVICE

Direct Marketing Association

PO Box 643

Carmel NY 10512

To "Opt Out" of receiving pre-screened credit card offers or to have your name removed from marketing lists sold through the four major credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, Trans-Union and Novus)

please call
1-888-567-8688

TELEMARKETING FRAUD

Is a crime that requires

VICTIM

PARTICIPATION

American consumers lose an estimated 40 billion dollars a year to fraudulent telemarketers. Many legitimate businesses use the telephone to sell bona fide goods and services but there are many operating as professional con artists who cheat and deceive consumers.

Fraudulent telemarketers take advantage of older consumers who may be more trusting and polite to strangers. Older women living alone are special targets. You wouldn't let a criminal in your front door - so do not let them in through your phone. Criminal telemarketers are ruthless and relentless in their pursuit to scam and victimize seniors.



Telephone con artists are skillful and sound believable - even when they are telling lies. It is often very difficult to know whether a telemarketing call is legitimate.



Some telephone swindlers call you day after day until you almost feel like the caller is a friend, not a total stranger.



It is difficult to get professional telephone con artists off the phone. Remember it isn't rude to hang up!



Many con artists promise free gifts, prizes, vacations or the investment of a lifetime but only if you act immediately. Resist high-pressure sales tactics.

**IF IT SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE -
IT PROBABLY IS
IF IT CAN'T WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW -
IT PROBABLY SHOULD**

COMMON PHONE SCAMS

Prize Offers - You may be told you have won a prize, but to increase your chances of winning the "big one", you need to buy something. The prizes are usually worthless. Remember when you're offered a "free prize" that "free means free."

Sweepstakes - Fraudulent telemarketers claim you have won a fantastic prize or large amount of money - but you must first pay something for taxes or delivery charges to collect the prize. Legitimate telemarketers using a sweepstakes will never require a purchase or payment of any type to enter or claim a prize. Participating in any sweepstakes also increases the chance your name will be sold for further telemarketing calls.

Canadian scams target U.S. citizens nationwide!
Don't send money or give any information to fraudulent telemarketers!

Cross Border Fraud - Fraudulent telemarketers operate in Canada and other foreign countries to escape U.S. laws and reduce the chances that American victims will ever recover their money. Montanans have fallen victim to cross border scam artists by sending money (most often through wire transfers) for monetary prize offers, large sweepstakes winnings, advance fee loan scams, and very profitable sounding investment opportunities. Other scams involve foreign lottery tickets that are phony "low risk" chances for high stake lotteries. Victims not only lose their money but risk violating federal law, which prohibits playing lotteries by mail or phone.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

TELEMARKETING FRAUD UNIT
444-4500

www.state.mt.us

P.O. BOX 200151
HELENA, MT 59620-0151

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
1-877-FTC-HELP
(1-877-382-4357)

www.ftc.gov

For a list of more than 100 free publications on telemarketing fraud and other consumer issues, write for Best Sellers, Public Reference, FTC, Washington, DC 20580 or access them through their web-site under Consumer Protection/Education.

PHONEBUSTERS

(To report Canadian Scams)

1-888-495-8501

www.phonebusters.com

Better Business Bureau

www.bbb.org

1-703-276-0100

The state of Montana does not have a BBB. However, most telemarketers call from other states, so it is possible to check on their ratings through this website. Charity Reports can be obtained through the Philanthropic Advisory Service from the BBB.

Consumer Sentinel Public Site

www.consumer.gov/sentinel

Facts on consumer frauds (telemarketing scams, prize promotions, identity theft, work at home schemes and internet cons)



Telemarketers may not call you before 8:00 a.m. or after 9:00 p.m. at your location or call you again after you informed them you don't want any further solicitation calls.

Whenever an unwanted telemarketer calls –

You must use these words:

"Put me on your Do Not Call List."

Saying you're not interested or don't call me again **will not** take you off their lists.

International calls - Beware of returning an international call without knowing it. If you do not recognize an area code - check it out in your phone directory. For additional protection, ask your local phone company to block international calls coming into your home.

Credit Card Protection Offers - DO NOT BUY worthless credit card "loss protection" insurance. These offers cost hundreds of dollars and are billed directly to your credit card. If you didn't authorize a charge-don't pay it. Follow your credit card issuer's procedures for disputing charges you have not authorized. According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), your responsibility for unauthorized charges is limited to \$50.

Recovery Scams - Con artists will call to help you recover money that you have sent to other con artists. Don't lose more money! No one can guarantee recovery of your money.

Charities - Con artists use names that sound like legitimate charities. Check them out carefully. Ask them what amount of money actually goes to the charity. Request written information and check with authorities. Chose charities you want to contribute to carefully.

Buyers Clubs - These "memberships" offer discounts on prescriptions, gasoline, groceries, travel, etc. Consumers are often charged for memberships despite the fact they said they only wanted the merchandise and declined the club membership.

Investments - People lose millions in "investment opportunities" or "get rich quick" schemes, which turn out to be worthless investments. Always discuss investment opportunities offered by unfamiliar businesses with your family, attorney or financial advisor.

Sales for the Handicapped - Products such as light bulbs, garbage bags etc. are sold to consumers who are told that all proceeds benefit the handicapped and disabled workers. Many of these "for profit" companies actually do not employ handicapped people and your donations are not tax deductible.

MOOCH LISTS- Name Selling

Participating in any scam puts your name on a list known as a "mooch" or "sucker" list. Your name is sold to other fraudulent telemarketers who think if you were victimized once you are a vulnerable target.

TIP-OFFS TO FRAUD

You may hear these lines coming from friendly voices on the other side of the telephone line:

- You have to act NOW or the offer won't be available
- You've won a free gift, vacation or prize, and you pay "only" the taxes or handling charges. Remember - taxes are paid to the IRS and not to scam artists.
- You must send or wire money, give a credit card or bank account number, or have a check picked up by a courier service
- You don't need to check out their company with anyone - including your family, lawyer, accountant or consumer protection agency.
- You don't need any written information about their company or their references.
- You can't afford to miss the "high profit, no risk" offer.

Beware of telemarketers who won't identify themselves or their company. Legitimate telemarketers are required by law to promptly identify themselves, state the purpose of the call is to sell goods or services, the nature of the goods and services, and that a purchase or payment is not necessary to win a prize or promotion.

PROTECT YOURSELF!!

It is often impossible to get your money back if you are the victim of a fraudulent telemarketer.

- ⇒ Don't buy from unfamiliar companies. Legitimate businesses understand when you want more information. Get written information.
- ⇒ Check out companies with the Telemarketing Fraud Unit, 444-4500. Unfortunately not all fraudulent telemarketing companies are known. There are thousands of them operating out of other states and other countries and new scams surface every day.
- ⇒ Always take time to make a decision. Legitimate businesses won't pressure you to make a quick decision. It's never rude to think over an offer. Make sure you fully understand the offer before buying.

